

THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY CONCEPT

Japanese Origin

Early in 1979, the Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Ohira, established a blue-ribbon panel of Japanese government and academic specialists, under the Chairmanship of Professor Saburo Okita (now Japan's Foreign Minister) to define in broad terms the parameters of a "Pan-Pacific Community" - the re-emergence of a concept put forward by, among others, former Japanese Foreign Minister Miki. In an interim report released in November, 1979, the Okita panel sketched the outline of a free and open community of countries, based on mutual interdependence and underpinned by a commitment to free trade. Five rather general areas were identified for more specific investigation: (1) the promotion of "mutual understanding" in the area of cultural, academic and person-to-person exchanges; (2) the structural adjustment of commercial and economic relationships which would maintain the principle of free trade and at the same time promote trade and economic growth in the region; (3) cooperation in ocean development and management; (4) the enrichment of economic cooperation, and (5) the discussion of monetary issues on a regional basis. The emphasis on "mutual understanding" as a first priority represented a shift away from earlier ideas of a purely economic community.

Reactions from Others

The Ohira initiative sparked lively interest in a variety of circles, particularly in the United States and Australia, where there